

INCREASING SCHOOL ENROLMENT AND RETENTION IN RURAL NEPAL

UWS IMPACT REPORT



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ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This Report details the approach and impact of a three-year education project delivered by UWS in rural Nepal, with funding from the UK Government through UK Aid Match.

Between April 2022 and March 2025, the project sought to address education poverty in four underserved districts of Nepal: Gulmi, Sankhuwasabha, Taplejung, and Bhojpur. The initiative aimed to enrol out-of-school children (OOSC), sustain their attendance, and strengthen foundational learning in literacy and numeracy, with a focus on girls, children with disabilities, and those in geographically isolated areas.

The project combined school construction and upgrades (67 schools), recruitment and training of community teachers, strengthening of School Management Committees (SMCs), and close work with local governments. While initially designed for 63 new schools, the strategy shifted in Year 1 to strengthen existing UWS schools, enhancing quality and cost-effectiveness without reducing reach.

By project completion, UWS reached 8,951 direct beneficiaries (8,833 children, 118 community teachers), surpassing targets in enrolment, gender parity, and inclusion of 258 children with disabilities (645% over target). Retention rates were exceptionally strong (97.3%, with 94.4% sustained in government-managed schools). Literacy targets were met, with 28.2% of Grades 1–3 children achieving grade-level reading proficiency by 2025, and the proportion of students meeting both literacy and numeracy benchmarks nearly doubled. Although numeracy targets were not fully achieved (8.4% vs. 18% target), substantial gains were made.

The project demonstrated resilience in the face of logistical challenges, monsoon delays, and demographic shifts like outmigration. Community ownership, strengthened governance, inclusive practices, and new roles such as Transition Officers have been mainstreamed into the UWS model. Overall, the initiative exceeded expectations in access, inclusion, and system strengthening, providing a sustainable model for delivering education in fragile and remote contexts.

PROJECT AIMS

Expanding Access through Inclusive School Infrastructure

Strengthening School Governance for Retention & Quality

Securing Sustainability through School Transition

Building Teacher Capacity for Foundation Learning

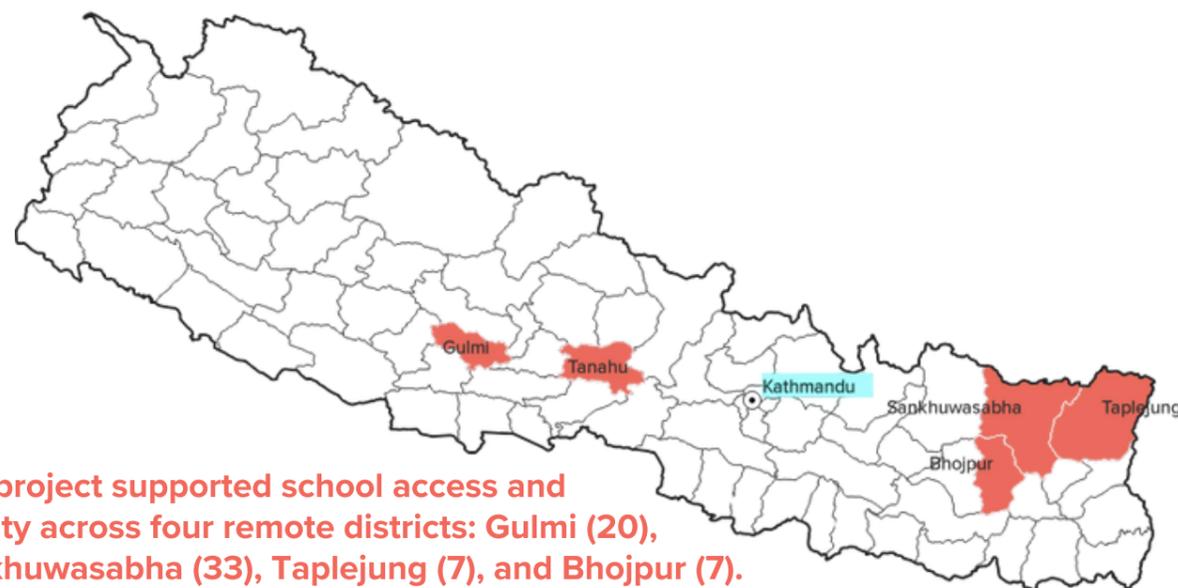


CONTEXT

Nepal continues to face significant challenges in ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all children, particularly those living in remote and marginalised communities. Despite national progress, persistent education poverty remains a critical barrier to development. According to recent estimates, approximately 86% of children in Nepal are affected by learning poverty, meaning they cannot read and understand a simple text by age 10. This figure highlights the urgent need for interventions that address both access and foundational learning outcomes.

In Nepal, poverty, geographic isolation, and systemic inequities perpetuate educational exclusion, disproportionately affecting girls, children with disabilities, and learners from marginalised ethnic groups. Many children who do attend school confront under-resourced classrooms, limited learning materials, and teachers who have received insufficient training, resulting in learning environments that undermine retention and achievement.

This project was developed to respond directly to these entrenched challenges by establishing learning environments that are safe, inclusive, and rooted in local community contexts. It sought to combine improvements in physical infrastructure with strengthened teacher capacity, robust school governance, and active community participation to support sustained attendance and improved learning.



The project supported school access and quality across four remote districts: Gulmi (20), Sankhuwasabha (33), Taplejung (7), and Bhojpur (7).



OUTPUT 1

EXPANDING ACCESS THROUGH INCLUSIVE SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE



Access to education begins with a safe, welcoming school. UWS built or upgraded 67 schools during the project, creating earthquake-resistant classrooms equipped with ramps, gender-segregated WASH facilities, and accessible toilets for children with disabilities. Every site was designed in consultation with communities and local governments, ensuring schools truly reflected local needs.

Where construction was delayed, temporary learning spaces ensured no child missed out on school. Materials were sourced locally and communities provided labour, strengthening ownership and embedding skills for the future. As a result, more than 8,000 children - girls and boys in nearly equal numbers - now have access to schools in their own villages. Families that once struggled with distance, unsafe routes, or inaccessible facilities can now send their children to learn with confidence.

8,197

children enrolled across 67 schools



4,075
Boys



4,122
Girls



258
Children with disabilities



OUTPUT 2

STRENGTHENING SCHOOL GOVERNANCE FOR RETENTION & QUALITY

Communities play a vital role in sustaining education. UWS established 29 School Management Committees (SMCs) and supported 67 SMCs to meet quarterly, enabling parents and community leaders to shape priorities such as enrolment, retention, and school improvement. The shift in mindset has been powerful: 93.9% of parents surveyed expressed a positive attitude toward girls' education, reflecting deeper community ownership and commitment to equal opportunities for all children.

29

School Management Committee (SMCs) established (100%)

67

SMCs meeting quarterly and identifying priorities for school improvements

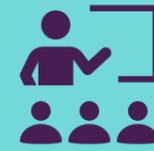
93.87%

parents surveyed have positive attitude towards educating children



OUTPUT 3

SECURING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH SCHOOL TRANSITION



575

(292 F/ 283 M)

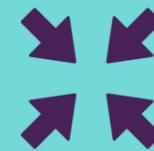
Government paid teachers UWS have successfully advocated to be placed within UWS schools



29

(100%)

New schools that governments have committed to transition into the national system



15

Post-transition schools now receive bi-annual monitoring and capacity support from local government officials, enabled through the training and tools provided by UWS

Long-term sustainability was central to the project's vision. UWS worked with local and national governments to prepare 67 schools for transition into the government system. In April 2024, 15 schools were successfully transitioned, with a retention rate of 94.4% - far above the target of 80%.

Governments have also committed to transition all 29 newly built schools, and 575 government-paid teachers have been placed in UWS schools, ensuring staffing is secured for the future. To maintain standards post-transition, schools now receive bi-annual monitoring and capacity support from local officials, enabled through UWS training and tools.



OUTPUT 4
BUILDING TEACHER CAPACITY FOR
FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING

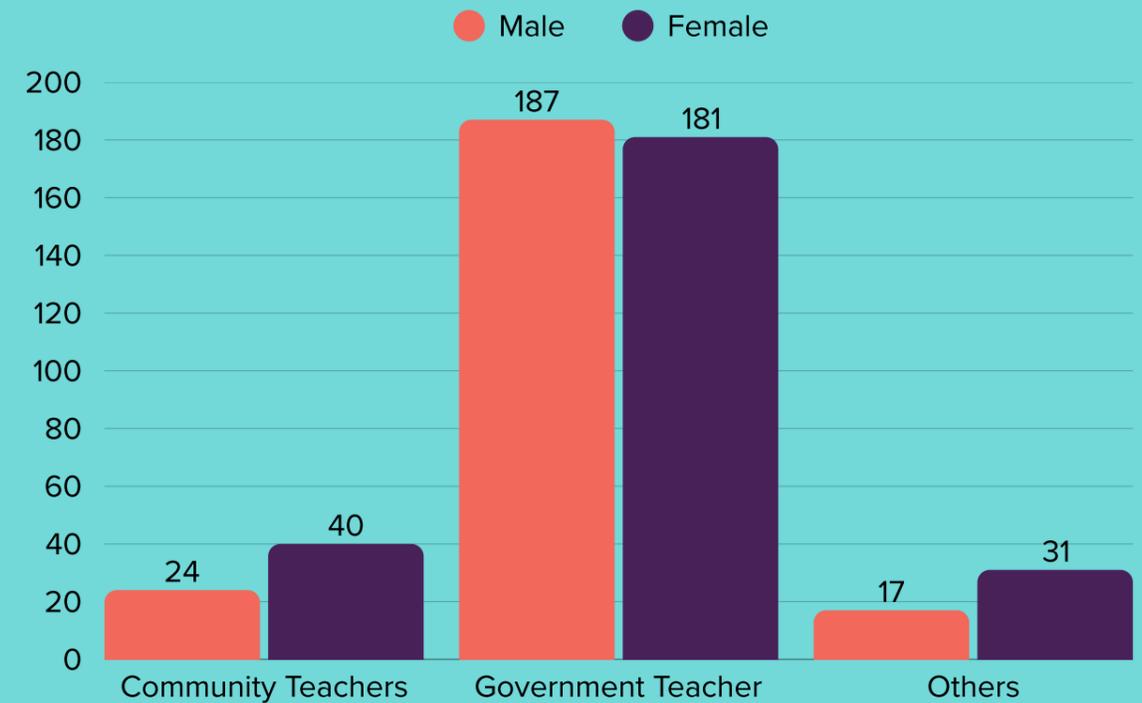


Quality teaching is central to student learning. UWS trained and mentored nearly 600 community and government teachers, building their capacity in literacy, numeracy, inclusive pedagogy, play-based learning, and classroom management.

By Year 3, 480 teachers had completed 40+ hours of training, averaging 40.7 hours each. Training was delivered through a cascade and peer-learning model, ensuring knowledge was shared widely while minimizing disruption to classrooms. Teachers not only received practical skills but also ongoing support to integrate new methods into daily teaching.

The results were significant: 72.8% of teachers were rated good or excellent in lesson delivery, directly improving classroom quality. Children benefitted from more engaging lessons, supportive teaching, and inclusive practices that ensured no child was left behind.

Number of teachers completing teachers training (40 hours)



43

UWS schools/ CLS recieved a good or excellent classification for lesson delivery

367

(210 F/ 157 M)

Teachers receiving a good or excellent classification for lesson delivery



BUILDING SCHOOLS BUILDING FUTURES

PARSHURAM'S STORY

Parshuram Chaudhary has spent more than a decade with UWS, turning bricks and mortar into safe schools and brighter futures for children in rural Nepal. In this account, translated from Nepali, he shares how building schools has become a way of building hope, opportunity, and lasting change for his community.

Parshuram serves as a Building Officer with UWS Nepal, leading construction projects that create inspiring places to learn. But his journey didn't begin in a position of leadership. **"I joined UWS Nepal over ten years ago as a labourer,"** he recalls. **"Back then, I was simply looking for work to support my family. I never imagined I'd grow into the role I have today."**

Through years of hands-on learning and perseverance, he advanced. Today, he supervises daily building activities, manages teams, ensures safety and quality, and coordinates with communities and local governments to keep projects on track.

"What motivated me most was the environment at UWS, the team's support, the learning opportunities, and the sense of purpose behind the work," he shares. **"I feel proud knowing that the schools we're building will serve generations of children. That's what makes every challenge worthwhile."**

Those challenges have been many; unpredictable weather, transport delays, and a shortage of skilled workers. But Parshuram has always faced them head-on, working with communities, providing on-site training, and encouraging his team. **"We overcame so much together."**

At home, Parshuram is a devoted husband and father of two sons. His progress at UWS has brought both stability and pride to his family. **"In the early days, things were difficult financially. But my family stood by me. Now they're proud that I'm part of something bigger, helping build schools that change lives."** His transformation has also reshaped how others see him: **"People in the community look up to me as someone skilled, reliable, and responsible. That respect has pushed me to work even harder."**

"When I see students walking into a safe, beautiful school that I helped build, I feel like I've done something truly meaningful," he reflects. **"That feeling of giving back to my community is the proudest chapter of my life."**



"I feel proud knowing that the schools we're building will serve generations of children. That's what makes every challenge worthwhile."
Parshuram Chaudhary, UWS Building Officer

IMPACT

OUR LASTING IMPACT TOGETHER

Across four districts of rural Nepal, this project has transformed access to education and strengthened learning for the most marginalised children.

Access and Inclusion

Children who once faced long, unsafe journeys or barriers to learning now have inclusive, child-friendly schools in their own villages. Gender parity has been achieved, and more children with disabilities are accessing education than ever before.

- 8,197 children enrolled in 67 schools (exceeded target).
- 258 children with disabilities enrolled (171% of target).
- Retention remained high at 97.3%, even in areas of high migration.

Quality of Teaching & Learning

Through sustained training and mentoring, teachers gained new skills in literacy, numeracy, and inclusive pedagogy. The result: classrooms that are more engaging, inclusive, and effective, directly improving student learning outcomes.

- 598 teachers trained, averaging 40.7 hrs each.
- 72.8% of teachers rated good or excellent in lesson delivery.
- Literacy rose to 28.2%, while numeracy doubled to 8.4%.

Sustainability & Community Ownership

By equipping communities and governments with the skills and tools to lead, UWS has secured long-term sustainability. Schools are not only functioning but thriving, with local leaders and officials ensuring progress continues beyond the project.

- 15 schools transitioned to government (94.4% retention post-transition).
- 575 government teachers placed in UWS schools.
- 603 SMC members trained to lead schools locally.

LESSONS LEARNT

Key lessons and success factors from this project that can include future programming include:

Community ownership drives results.

When parents and local leaders are actively engaged, enrolment, retention, and equal opportunities for girls all improve.

Sustainability must be built in early.

Training School Management Committees and securing government partnerships from the start ensured smooth transitions and strong post-project retention.

Consistent teacher training matters.

Longer, structured training hours with follow-up mentoring were key to improving classroom quality and student learning outcomes.

Flexibility is essential.

Temporary classrooms and adaptive planning helped mitigate delays caused by weather, migration, and construction challenges, ensuring no child missed out on learning.

CONCLUSION

This project has shown what is possible when schools are built with communities at the heart. Together, we have enrolled thousands of children, improved teaching quality, and created inclusive learning environments that reach the most marginalised. The transition to government ownership ensures that these gains will endure for generations, proving that sustainable change is possible even in Nepal's most remote districts.



UWS EDUCATE THE FUTURE CHANGE THE FUTURE

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